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LESSON LEARNED**Exercise Planning: Incorporating Hospitals into Planning****SUMMARY**

Exercise planners should fully engage all hospitals participating in a full-scale exercise in all aspects of the planning process. The hospital training objectives should be considered as critical to the exercise as the incident site training objectives.

DESCRIPTION

On February 23, 2005, the Pierce County, Washington Terrorism Early Warning/Response Taskforce staged Cascade Resolve 05, a multi-agency, full-scale exercise. The exercise was designed to stress various agencies in the region by simulating multiple events on the Puyallup County Fairgrounds, including a large conventional explosion resulting in a high number of casualties, structural damage with trapped victims, chemical and radiological hazards, and multiple hostage-taking situations. In addition to the field component, the exercise included three local hospitals. Exercise control staff placed controller/evaluators, drawn from hospital staff, at the hospitals to monitor and evaluate the relevant elements of the exercise.

The exercise design team, however, focused its planning on the exercise events taking place at the Puyallup County Fairgrounds. The design team did not fully engage the three participating hospitals in the exercise planning process. Once the exercise began, communications between personnel at the incident sites and participating hospitals was inconsistent at best. Though on-scene emergency medical service personnel had up-to-date information about the number, status, and transportation destination of the victims, they did not communicate effectively with the participating hospitals. One hospital received timely information, another received information after a long delay, and a third hospital received no information at all. As a result, participating hospitals lacked accurate and timely operational awareness of events taking place in the field.

According to the exercise after-action report, the three participating hospitals felt that Cascade Resolve 05 had become an exercise focused on the fire and law enforcement response at the fairgrounds. The participating hospitals felt their objectives were not reflected in the conduct of the exercise.

Exercise planners should fully engage all hospitals participating in the full-scale exercise in all aspects of the planning process. The hospital training objectives should be as critical to the exercise as the incident site training objectives.

CITATION

Pierce County, Washington, Department of Emergency Management. *Pierce County, Washington Exercise – Cascade Resolve 05: After Action Report and Improvement Plan*. Jun 2005.

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